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Indian Diplomacy and the Opening of the Revolution in the West

By James Alton James, Ph. D.
Professor of History in Northwestern University

[From the Proceedings of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin for 1909,
pages 125-142]

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Indian Diplomacy and Opening of the Revolution in the West

By James Alton James, Ph. D.

From the opening of the Revolutionary War, American leaders looked to the conquest of Detroit, the headquarters of the posts and key to the fur-trade and control of the Indian tribes to the northwest of the Ohio.¹ Throughout the war, this post, in the possession of the British, "continued," as Washington wrote, "to be a source of trouble to the whole Western country."²

The garrison at Detroit, at the beginning of the year 1776, consisted of 120 soldiers under the command of Capt. Richard Lernoult. The fort was defended by a "stockade of Picquets,"

¹ *American Archives*, 4th ser., iii, p. 1368; *Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, xxvii, pp. 612 *et seq.*

From this post, a trace led westward by way of the Maumee and across the upper Wabash to Post St. Vincent. In like manner an Indian path extended to Kaskaskia and other posts on the upper-Mississippi. Not only was it a great centre for the fur-trade, but in years of good harvests flour and grain were furnished to other posts from Detroit.—Draper MSS., 46J9. The post was of great importance during the French regime. Indians from the Northwest took part, in common with Canadians, in the battle on the Plains of Abraham. June 29, 1759, a courier announced that there were about to arrive 100 French and 150 Indians from Detroit; 600 to 700 Indians with M. Linctot, 100 Indians with M. Rayeul, and the convoy of M. Aubry from Illinois with 600 to 700 Indians. Twelve hundred other Indians from the same region were also reported to be on the way.—*Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xviii, pp. 212, 213.

² Letter to Daniel Brodhead, Dec. 29, 1780.

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about nine feet out of the earth, without "frize or ditch." Three hundred and fifty French and English made up the entire number of men in the town and near-by country, capable of bearing arms.³ The majority of these men were French militiamen assembled under their own officers. Commanding the fort were two British armed schooners and three sloops manned by thirty "seamen and servants." There was not a single gunner among the crews; they were dissatisfied with the service and incapable of making much resistance.

Three hundred miles away to the southeast was Fort Pitt, the only American fortification (1775) guarding the long frontier stretching from Greenbrier, in southwestern Virginia, to Kittanning on the upper Allegheny.⁴ This fort was without a garrison. The inhabitants were dependent on the protection of the militia of the neighboring counties, and large numbers were reported to be in a most defenceless condition.⁵

From these two centres, in council after council, were to be exercised all of the diplomatic finesse of white men in attempts to gain control over the Indians of the Northwest. Assembled at some of these conferences were the chiefs and other representatives of the Delawares of the Muskingum and the Ohio; the Shawnee and Mingo of the Scioto, the Wyandot, Ottawa, and Potawatomi of Lake Michigan, the Chippewa of all the Lakes; and, besides these, the Miami, Seneca, Sauk, and numer-

³ Thwaites and Kellogg, *Revolution on the Upper Ohio* (Madison, Wis., 1908), pp. 147-151.

Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton arrived Nov. 9, 1775, but Captain Lernoult commanded the troops until the summer of 1776.

The total population in 1773 was about 1,400; 298 of them men.—*Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, ix. p. 649. The population in 1778 was 2144; 564 being men.—*Ibid.*, p. 469.

⁴ Fort Blair, near the mouth of the Kanawha, had been evacuated by order of Governor Dunmore, and was burned by some of the Ohio Indians.—*Amer. Archives*, 4th ser., iv, p. 201.

⁵ George Morgan, Indian agent at Fort Pitt, in a letter of May 16, 1776, reported that there was "scarcely powder west of the Mountains sufficient for every man to prime his gun and only 200 lb. wt. in the Fort here."—Letter to Lewis Morris, *Papers of Continental Congress*, vol. 163, entitled "Generals Clinton, Nixon, Nicola, et al., pp. 237-239.

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ous other tribes. All told, the Northwestern tribes numbered some 8,000 warriors.⁶

It is not certain which of the urgent invitations issued in May, 1775, by Col. Guy Johnson⁷ and by Ethan Allen to take up arms, met with the earliest response.

The latter thus wrote to some of the Canadian tribes:⁸

I want to have your warriours come and see me, and help me fight the King's Regular Troops. You know they stand all close together, rank and file, and my men fight so as Indians do, and I want your warriours to join with me and my warriours like brothers, and ambush the Regulars; if you will, I will give you money, blankets, tomahawks, knives, paint and anything that there is in the army just like brothers, and I will go with you into the woods to scout; and my men and your men will sleep together, and eat and drink together, and fight Regulars, because they first killed our brothers.

Ye know my warriours must fight, but if you our brother Indians do not fight on either side, we will still be friends and brothers; and you may come and hunt in our woods, and come with your canoes in the lake and let us have venison at our forts on the lake, and have rum, bread and what you want and be like brothers.

In general, the American policy tended towards securing Indian neutrality, which was clearly stated by the Continental Congress in a speech prepared for the Six Nations early in July, 1775. The war was declared to be a family quarrel between the colonists and Old England, in which the Indians were in no way concerned. It was urged that they should remain at home and not join on either side, but "keep the hatchet buried deep."⁹ They were apprehensive of the policy to be

⁶ Delawares and Munsee 600, Shawnee, 600, Wyandot 300, Ottawa 600, Chippewa 5,000, Potawatomi 400, Kickapoo, Vermillion, and other small tribes of the Wabash 800, Miami or Picts 300, Mingo of Pluggy's Town (Scioto River) 60.—Morgan, *Letter Book*, iii, March 27, 1778.

Wyandot 180, Tawa 450, Potawatomi 450, Chippewa 5,000, Shawnee 300, Delawares or Munsee 600, Miami 300.—Schoolcraft, *Indian Tribes*, iii, pp. 560, 561.

The Sauk, Foxes, and Iowa numbered some 1,400 warriors.

⁷ *Amer. Archives*, 4th ser., ii, p. 665.

⁸ This letter was written from Crown Point, May 24, 1775.—*Ibid.*, pp. 713, 714.

⁹ July 13, 1775.—*Ibid.*, p. 1882.

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pursued by the British. Consequently, three departments of Indian affairs were created, to be under the control of commissioners, whose duties were to treat with the Indians in order to preserve their peace and friendship and prevent them from taking part in the present commotions. They were to superintend also the distribution of arms, ammunition, and clothing, such as was essential to the existence of the Indians.¹⁰

Within a year, however, a resolution was passed that it was highly expedient to engage the Indians in the service of the united colonies and especially to secure their co-operation in bringing about the reduction of Detroit.¹¹

In a dispatch to Congress, George Morgan thus outlined the plan which, in general, was pursued by Indian agents of the best type on the frontier:¹²

We shall ever hold it our duty, to exert our utmost influence to prevent hostilities and to promote peace and harmony with the Indian tribes. The cheapest and most humane mode of obtaining an alliance with the savages is by buying of their friendship. They have been long taught by contending nations to be bought and sold. We are well satisfied we can bestow our country no service more essential to her interest than by restraining the hostilities of the Indians and giving ease to the minds of our frontier inhabitants.

Indeed, this was the safest course to pursue, for on the frontiers constant danger from retaliatory attacks outweighed any

¹⁰ July 12, 1775, in *Ibid.*, p. 1879. The three departments were Northern, Middle, and Southern. The Northern Department included the Six Nations and all other Indians north of these tribes. The Southern included the Cherokee and other Southern tribes. The Middle, all Indians between the territory of the two others. There were to be five commissioners for the Southern and three each for the two other departments.

¹¹ *Journals of Continental Congress*, iv, p. 395.

The commissioners were instructed, May 25, 1776, to offer as an inducement £50 of Pennsylvania currency for every prisoner (soldier of the garrison) brought to them. The Indians were to be given the free plunder of the garrison.

Washington was authorized to employ Indians, on June 17, 1776.—*Id.* (new ed.), v, p. 452.

¹² Morgan, *Letter Book*, ii, July 30, 1776.

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assistance which might be secured through the enlistment of Indians.

The British early employed the savages to cut off outlying settlements. Under plea that the "rebels" had used Indians in their hostilities on the frontier of Quebec, after the capture of Ticonderoga, and that they had brought Indians for the attack on Boston, General Gage urged that General Carleton might be privileged to use Canadians and Indians for a counter stroke.¹³

The letter which followed, containing "His Majesty's commands for engaging a body of Indians," and promising a large assortment of goods for presents, was of form merely. On the day it was written, 500 Indians were brought to Montreal to join the English army.¹⁴ Thereafter, the British were to enlist the savages for service with the regular army, as well as to employ them with more terrible results in cutting off outlying settlements and raiding the frontiers.

There was necessity for prompt action on the part of the Americans, in order that they might gain the friendship of the tribes beyond the Ohio. In the provisional treaty at Camp Charlotte, Governor Dunmore promised the Indians that he would return in the spring and bring it to completion. By that time, the Revolutionary movement had assumed such proportions that he deemed it inadvisable to risk a journey to the frontier. Again, he found a ready agent in Dr. John Connolly,¹⁵ a bold, enterprising, restless character who had been left in command of the garrison of seventy-five men at Fort Dunmore. In a conference at Williamsburg, in February, Major Connolly was instructed by Lord Dunmore to use his efforts to induce the Indians to espouse the cause of Great Britain. In this he succeeded, in so far as he brought together at Pittsburgh the chiefs of the Delawares and a few Mingo, whom he assured that a general treaty, with presents, was soon to be held with all the Ohio Indians.¹⁶ Disbanding the garri-

¹³ June 12, 1775, General Gage to Lord Dartmouth.—*Amer. Archives*, 4th ser., ii, p. 968.

¹⁴ August 2, 1775.—*Id.*, iii, pp. 6, 12.

¹⁵ *Penna. Colon. Records*, 1760-1776, pp. 477, 484, 485, 637, 682.

¹⁶ *Rev. on Upper Ohio*, p. 35.

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son in July, he returned to find Dunmore a fugitive on board a man-of-war off York. Together they concocted a plan fraught with grave consequences for the back country and for the American cause in general. In a personal interview, Connolly won the assent of General Gage to the plan, and received instructions for the development.¹⁷ It was designed that Connolly should proceed to Detroit, where he was to have placed under his command the garrison from Fort Gage, led by Capt. Hugh Lord. This nucleus of an army, together with the French and Indians of Detroit, was to proceed to Fort Pitt. It was hoped that their force would be enhanced by the Ohio Indians, for whom liberal presents were provided, and by numbers of the militia from Augusta County, who for their loyalty were to have 300 acres of land confirmed to each of them. Forts Pitt and Fineastle were to be destroyed, should they offer resistance, and the expedition was then to take and fortify Fort Cumberland and capture Alexandria, assisted by troops led by Dunmore and landed under protection of the ships of war.¹⁸ Thus were the Southern colonies to be cut off from the Northern.

Conditions promised well for the success of the enterprise. Connolly had won the favor of the Indians; Fort Pitt, as already noted, was in a condition to offer but little defense; and the backwoodsmen were without the necessary equipment in arms and ammunition, to obstruct such an expedition. They were disunited also, because of the Pennsylvania and Virginia boundary dispute. A letter from Connolly to a supposed friend at Pittsburgh, led to his betrayal. Virginia authorities were informed of the intrigue. Runners were sent out from all the Southern provinces into the Indian nations through which he proposed to pass, with orders for his arrest.¹⁹ With three associates, he was captured near Hagerstown, while on his way to Fort Pitt.²⁰

¹⁷ The entire plan is given in *Ibid.*, pp. 140-142.

¹⁸ Thwaites and Kellogg, *Dunmore's War* (Madison, Wis., 1905), p. 86; *Amer. Archives*, 4th ser., iv, p. 616.

¹⁹ *Id.*, iii, p. 1543.

²⁰ A copy of the plan was in their possession. Capture of Connolly, in *Id.*, iv, p. 616.

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For upwards of two years thereafter, the frontiers were free from any general participation in the war. Meantime, immigration to the West continued,²¹ and the contest went on between British and American agents for ascendancy over the Indians of that region.

Major Connolly had conducted his treaty with the Indians at Pittsburgh in the presence of the committee of correspondence of West Augusta County.²² The provisions and goods furnished by the committee on that occasion assisted materially in gaining the good-will of the Indians for later negotiations. A petition to Congress from the committee, followed at an early date, setting forth their fears of a rupture with the Indians on account of the late conduct of Governor Dunmore, and asking that commissioners from Pennsylvania and Virginia should be appointed to confer with the Indians at Pittsburgh.²³

On June 24, therefore, six commissioners were appointed by Virginia for the purpose of making a treaty with the Ohio Indians, and a sum of £2,000 was appropriated for that purpose. Capt. James Wood, one of the commissioners, a man well-versed in frontier affairs, was delegated to visit the tribes and extend to them an invitation to attend the conference at Pittsburgh. He was likewise to explain the dispute to the Indians, make them sensible of the great unanimity of the colonies, and "assure them of our Peaceable Intentions towards them and that we did not stand in need of or desire any assistance from them."²⁴

The day following, Captain Wood set out from Williamsburg on his hazardous journey of two months, accompanied by Simon Girty, his sole companion, who acted as interpreter. The report made on his return was not wholly promising for the cause he represented. His reception by the Delawares, Shawnee, and other tribes was friendly, for the fear excited by the battle of Point Pleasant was still upon them.²⁵ He learned, however,

²¹ More "cabin improvements" were made in 1776 than in any other year.—Draper MSS., 4C485.

²² *Rev. on Upper Ohio*, pp. 37, 38.

²³ *Jour. of Continental Congress* (new ed.), ii, p. 76.

²⁴ *Rev. on Upper Ohio*, p. 35.

²⁵ These two tribes had invited others to unite with them against the English in 1764.—*Wis. Hist. Colls.*, xviii, p. 262.

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that two British emissaries had already presented belts and strings of wampum to seventeen nations, inviting them to unite with the French and English against the Virginians.²⁶ They were warned that an attack by the "Big Knives" was imminent from two directions, by the Ohio and by the Great Lakes. The Virginians were a distinct people, they were assured, and an attack upon them would in no case be resented by the other colonies. Besides, the invitation to a treaty, which would be extended to them, should under no conditions be accepted; for the representatives who were to meet at Pittsburgh could not be depended upon. Similar advice was given the tribes of the upper Allegheny River, brought together at Niagara. Many of these Indians, at the instigation of Governor Carleton and Guy Johnson, were induced to go to Albany, and many more to Montreal, to join the British armies.

The Virginia commissioners, together with those appointed by Congress, assembled at Pittsburgh, September 10. Thus, notwithstanding English opposition,²⁷ which in a measure had been overcome by traders, chiefs, and delegates from the Seneca, Delawares, Wyandot, Mingo, and Shawnee gathered slowly for the conference. Each tribe on arrival was received with "Drum and Colours and a Salute of small arms from the Garrison."²⁸

During a period of three weeks, the commissioners strove by speech, and through presents of clothing and strings of wampum, to convince the Indians that they should keep the hatchet buried, and use all endeavor to induce the Six Nations and other tribes to remain absolutely neutral. They were assured that the cause of Virginia was the cause of all America. The commissioners say:²⁹

In this dispute your Interest is Involved with ours so far as this, that in Case those People with whom we are Contending shou'd Subdue us, your *Lands*, your *Trade*, your *Liberty* and all that is dear to you must fall with us, for if they wou'd Destroy our flesh and Spill our Blood which is the same with theirs; what can you who are no way related to or Connected with them to Expect? * * * we are

²⁶ *Amer. Archives*, 4th ser., iii, pp. 76-78.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 1542, 1543.

²⁸ *Rev. on Upper Ohio*, p. 74.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 95.

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Not Afraid these People will Conquer us, they Can't fight in our Country, and you Know we Can; we fear not them, nor any Power on Earth.

In the event of American success, they declare, with true American assurance, they would be so incensed against those Indians who fought against them, "that they would march an army into their country, destroy them and take their lands from them."³⁰ To still further convince the Indians of their invincibility, they assert that the Indian tribes at the North were ready to become their allies, and that the people of Canada, with the exception of a few of Governor Carleton's fools, were friendly to the American cause.³¹ The natives were invited to send their children to be educated among the white people, without expense to themselves.³² No little trouble was experienced in leading the Indians to agree to surrender all prisoners and negroes, and deliver up stolen horses. This done, peace "to endure forever" was established.

That these children of the woods were greatly divided, and at a loss how to act, was in no way surprising. Promises of the British emissaries for a successful issue of their arms, were presented in a fashion quite as alluring. Lieutenant-Governor Hamilton learned of the treaty shortly after it was concluded, through an Indian who was present, and a Frenchman who had been stationed within ten miles of Pittsburgh. The special mission of this Frenchman was to discover the effect of the treaty upon the savages, and neutralize the results wherever possible.³³

Hamilton felt convinced that any treaty which might have been made would endure for a brief period only, on account of the "haughty, violent dispositions" of the Virginians. But arms, ammunition, rum, and other presents in ever-increasing

³⁰ *Amer. Archives*, 5th ser., ii, p. 518.

³¹ *Rev. on Upper Ohio*, p. 95.

³² *Amer. Archives*, 4th ser., iii, p. 1542.

Dr. Thomas Walker, on his return, took a young Indian with him to be educated. On quitting Virginia, in 1779, this Indian became an enemy of the state.

³³ *Rev. on Upper Ohio*, pp. 127-135.

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quantities, were the ready means of winning savage favor.³⁴ That the colonists might make a show of presents at first, but that they would be unable to furnish the different nations with their necessary wants, was an argument shrewdly used by British officials, for the savages had already become aware of American poverty. Threats to send canoe-loads of goods back to Montreal, were whips upon such tribes as might show any disposition to waver.

But the jealousy of the Indians was most quickly aroused by accounts of encroachments upon their lands. The contest for their alliance brought out what seemed to the Indians to be two distinct policies. Congress decreed that no encroachments should be made beyond the line agreed upon at Fort Stanwix.³⁵ The commissioners at Pittsburgh declared it to be their purpose not to encroach on Indian lands, and to retain only the tracts acquired by treaty.³⁶

It became increasingly difficult for the authorities to keep faith with the Indians, for the acquisition of extensive tracts of their lands, beyond the fixed boundary, was continuous.³⁷ Frontiersmen continued to push the settled area forward, in total disregard of proclamations and boundaries. There were many of them who even hoped for a general Indian war, in order that the seizure of lands might go forward. To this end, parties were formed for the purpose of killing Indians on their way for a friendly visit, and for waylaying hunters on their

³⁴ "What I mentioned to you on the subject of expenses," General Carleton wrote to Hamilton, Oct. 6, 1776, "was in consequence of instructions from the Treasury, but it was not intended to limit you with regard to such as are absolutely necessary for putting your Post in a proper state of defence and for keeping the Indians in readiness for, and a disposition to act as circumstances shall require."—*Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, ix, p. 344.

"But the Indians must have presents," another official exclaimed; "whenever we fall off from that article, they are no more to be depended upon."—De Peyster to Haldimand, *Ibid.*, p. 375.

³⁵ *Jour. of Continental Congress*, iv, p. 318 (April 29, 1776).

³⁶ *Rev. on Upper Ohio*, pp. 98, 118.

³⁷ From 1775 to November, 1778, the amount of Indian lands thus acquired was reported to be seventy million acres.—Letter of George Morgan to Henry Laurens, Nov. 29, 1778, Morgan *Letter Book*. iii.

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own lands. Scouting parties employed by the county-lieutenants on the Monongahela and the Ohio were guilty of acts of lawlessness,³⁸ which pointed to a premeditated design to bring on general hostilities.

According to an English proclamation, no deeds to lands were considered valid until they were passed by the authority of the chief governor, registered at Quebec, and entered at the office in Detroit. Governor Hamilton declared at the close of the year 1778 that he had never granted lands at Detroit.³⁹ He said:⁴⁰

As there has been a restraint laid upon granting land to settlers at this place, whose farms are small and families numerous, the consequence has been young men growing to age engage as Canoemen, go off to distant settlements and in general become vagabonds so that the settlement does not increase in numbers as may be seen by comparing the recensment of 1776 with that of 1766.

The attention of the Indians was called to the fact, of which they were already well aware, that the "Big Knife" had been pushing them back for many years and would not rest until he was possessed of all this country. The origin of the following message, therefore, from the Six Nations and Chippewa to the Virginians and Pennsylvanians, early in the year 1777, may be easily discerned:⁴¹

You have feloniously taken possession of part of our country on the branches of the Ohio as well as the Susquehanna. To the latter [Pennsylvanians] we have some time since sent you word to quit our Lands as we now do to you as we don't know we ever give you liberty nor can we be easy in our minds while there is an arm'd force at our very doors nor do we think you or anybody else would—Therefore to use you with more Jenity than you have a right to expect, we now tell you in a peaceful manner to quit our lands wherever you have possessed yourselves of them immediately or blame yourselves for whatever may happen.

While the treaty at Pittsburgh had been made, in the language of its text, to last "until the sun shall shine no more, or the

³⁸ *Rev. on Upper Ohio*, pp. 27, 34. *Morgan Letter Book*, i, April 1, 1777. Five or six spies fired on three Delaware Indians in their hunting camp, which they afterwards plundered.

³⁹ *Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, ix, p. 474.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 433.

⁴¹ *Morgan Letter Book*, i, Feb. 2, 1777.

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waters fail to run in the Ohio," both of these reverses of nature seem to have taken place in the Indian imagination by the following spring. In the meantime, they had been visited by British agents to secure their adherence.⁴² The traces to Detroit were well worn by the tribes which assembled there to meet Hamilton, who strove in every way to excite the Indians to take up the hatchet.⁴³ To this end, British officers were generous with their presents and lavish in their hospitality, partaking with the Indians in the feast of roast ox, and recovering their dead anew with rum.

Various desultory expeditions by the Indians kept the frontiers in continuous alarm. During the conference at Pittsburgh, wandering bands of Wyandot and Mingo went to the mouth of the Kentucky, "to look at the white people." On their return, they shot two white boys at Boonesborough. Three warriors of the Six Nations returned in June with two prisoners. A party of four Shawnee, returning in August from the Cherokee country, killed two white men at Big Bone Lick. The whites retaliated by shooting two of the Indians.⁴⁴

Congress, early in April, appointed Col. George Morgan Indian agent for the Middle Department. The choice was a wise one. For a number of years he had been a trader in the Illinois country, where he had become noted among the Indians for his generosity and strict honesty. No man of the time better understood the methods necessary in winning the friendship of the Western tribes. He was instructed to forward at once the great belt presented to the Indians at Pittsburgh.⁴⁵ The commissioners for the Middle Department were directed to conclude a treaty with the Western tribes at the earliest convenient time. Morgan was, so far as possible, to adjust all differences through arbitration⁴⁶—in the language of the instructions:⁴⁷

⁴² *Rev. on Upper Ohio*, p. 144.

⁴³ *Morgan Letter Book*, ii, Aug. 31, 1776.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Aug. 7, 1776.

⁴⁵ *Jour. of Continental Congress*, iv, p. 268.

⁴⁶ One of the arbitrators was to be selected by the commissioners—or, in their absence, by the Indian agent—and one each by the parties in the dispute.—*Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 294, 301.

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Inspire them with justice and humanity, and dispose them to introduce the arts of civil and social life and to encourage the residence of husbandmen and handicraftsmen among them.

In pursuance of this general policy, assurance had already been given to the Delawares by Congress, upon the request of their chief, that in addition to the establishment of satisfactory trade relations and the protection of their right to the lands,⁴⁸ there should be sent to them a schoolmaster, a Christian minister, and a man competent to give them instruction in agriculture.⁴⁹

Arriving at Pittsburgh, May 16, 1776, Morgan, in his endeavor to prevent the attendance of the Indians at a council called by Hamilton at Detroit, proceeded at once to the Shawnee towns.⁵⁰ William Wilson, a trader who accompanied Morgan, extended the invitation to other tribes to assemble at Pittsburgh, September 10, for the purpose of making a treaty.

No incident better illustrates the situation which Americans were forced to meet in these critical preliminary years, than Wilson's reception by Hamilton. With three companions, Wilson, upon invitation of the Wyandot, visited their village opposite Detroit and delivered to the chiefs the speech and belt sent by Morgan.⁵¹ Hamilton having expressed the desire to speak with him in a friendly manner, Wilson accompanied the chiefs to Detroit. In explaining the message to the Indians, Hamilton declared that the people who sent it were enemies and traitors to his king, and that he would prefer to lose his right hand rather than take one of them by the hand. Tearing the speech and cutting the belt to pieces, he then spoke to the assembled Indians on a tomahawk belt.

White Eyes, chief of the Delawares, who accompanied Wilson, was ordered to leave Detroit before sunset, "as he regarded

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 268.

⁴⁹ Speech to Captain White Eyes (April 10, 1776), who had passed the winter in Philadelphia.—*Ibid.*, p. 269.

The preceding November, two blacksmiths were employed to reside among the Iroquois and work for them.—*Id.*, iii, p. 366.

⁵⁰ *Amer. Archives*, 5th ser., ii, p. 514.

⁵¹ White Eyes and John Montour were two of his companions.—*Ibid.*, p. 515.

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his head." Wilson, likewise, was directed to leave at once, receiving a parting word from the governor, which was well calculated to excite fear among the frontiersmen and enthusiasm for the British cause among the savages. In reporting the affair, Wilson thus quoted Hamilton's remarks:

He would be glad "if I would inform the people on my return of what I had seen; that all the Indians I saw there at the treaty were of the same way of thinking; and that he would be glad if the people would consider the dreadful consequences of going to war with so terrible an enemy and accept the King's pardon while it could be obtained."

Hamilton then informed Wilson that an army of 20,000 men were landed in Canada, and had driven the rebels entirely out of that government and were pursuing them to the southward; that 20,000 more were landed in New York, and the same number to the southward, with the completest train of artillery that ever came out of Europe on any occasion, and that the king's triumph was assured.⁵²

The summer months were full of foreboding for the now terror-stricken frontiersmen. Six hundred Cherokee were reported as being ready to strike the Virginia frontier with a determination to kill or make prisoners of all the people. These savages had also accepted the war-belt from the Shawnee and Mingo, and agreed to fall on the Kentucky settlements.⁵³ A general confederation of all the Western tribes was reported, with the aim of destroying all frontier settlements,⁵⁴ and there was delay only until their scattered young men should be called in and the corn necessary for subsistence should ripen. In a speech to the Mingo, the most desperate of savage tribes, Hamilton is said to have stirred up their most brutal instincts. As he delivered to them the tomahawk, bullets, and powder, having previously

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 518. General Howe wrote Lord Germaine as to the actual situation as follows: "Upon the present appearance of things, I look upon the further progress of this army for the campaign to be rather precarious, an attack upon Rhode Island excepted."

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 1236—"Overhill Cherokee."

⁵⁴ Morgan *Letter Book*, ii, Aug. 31, 1776: Indian commissioners to a committee of Westmoreland County.

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taken part, as usual, with his officers in the war-song,⁵⁵ he declared :⁵⁶

that he wonder'd to see them so foolish as not to see that the Big Knife was come up very near to them and claimed one half the water in the Ohio and that if any of the Indians cross'd over to their side of the River they immediately took him, laid his head on a big block and chopp'd it off, that he had now put them in a way to prevent such usage and that if they met any of them they should strike their tomahawks into their heads, cut off some of the hair and bring it to him.

It was suspected that 1,500 Chippewa and Ottawa were rendezvousing with the intention of attacking Fort Pitt.⁵⁷ Driven to desperation, backwoodsmen forsook their clearings, evacuating the country for 200 miles, except at certain places where some of them forted.⁵⁸

At the time, the frontier defense was entrusted to 100 men at Fort Pitt, 100 at Big Kanawha, and 25 at Wheeling, all in the pay of Virginia. These numbers were far too meagre for the purpose, much less capable of any offensive warfare.⁵⁹ Messengers were dispatched to Congress and to Williamsburg, imploring an augmentation of the numbers in the garrisons and the formation of new posts having proper supplies of ammunition and provisions.⁶⁰ The militia of Westmoreland and West Augusta counties were called out.⁶¹ The county-lieutenants of Hampshire, Dunmore, Frederick, and Berkeley were directed to collect provisions and hold their militia in readiness to march to Fort Pitt for immediate service.⁶² A company of militia was

⁵⁵ *Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, ix, p. 482.

⁵⁶ *Morgan Letter Book*, ii, Aug. 18, 31, 1776: to the committee of Congress for Indian affairs.

⁵⁷ *Rev. on Upper Ohio*, p. 200.

⁵⁸ *Morgan Letter Book*, i, Nov. 8, 1776: George Morgan to John Hancock, president of Congress.

⁵⁹ *Id.*, ii, Aug. 18, 1776: to committee on Indian affairs.

⁶⁰ Congress directed that a ton of gunpowder should immediately be sent.—*Jour. Continental Congress*, iv, p. 396.

⁶¹ *Rev. on Upper Ohio*, p. 200.

⁶² *Morgan Letter Book*, ii, Aug. 31, 1776: commissioners to county-lieutenants.

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ordered out as "rangers" for Fineastle County. But notwithstanding the defenseless condition of the frontier, apprehension was so widespread lest the savages should destroy their homes during their absence, that the militia was gotten together only after great delay,⁶³ many absolutely refusing the draft.⁶⁴

Not until the 644 warriors and chiefs representing the Six Nations, Delawares, Munsee, and Shawnee assembled at Pittsburgh, was it known for what purpose they came. The conference served to dissipate the widespread gloom, for these Indian envoys promised "inviolable peace with the United States and neutrality during the war with Great Britain."⁶⁵ Twelve chiefs were induced to visit Philadelphia, where they were introduced to Congress. For a few months after the treaty, all the other Western tribes, with the exception of a few of the Mingo known as Pluggy's Band, seemed desirous of preserving peaceful relations.⁶⁶

With difficulty, Colonel Morgan persuaded the Virginia authorities that an expedition⁶⁷ against these banditti would tend to bring on general hostilities with the tribes already jealous of the slightest encroachment by Americans.⁶⁸ He thought it more essential to restrain the frontiersmen and promote good order among them; to pacify leading men among the tribes by liberal

⁶³ *Amer. Archives*, 5th ser., ii, p. 513.

⁶⁴ *Rev. on Upper Ohio*, pp. 174, 240.

⁶⁵ *Morgan Letter Book*, i, Nov. 8, 1776: Morgan to John Hancock. *Amer. Archives*, 5th ser., iii, pp. 599, 600.

⁶⁶ *Morgan Letter Book*, i, Jan. 4, 1777.

It has been estimated that there were some seventy families included in this band. They were joined by twenty young men of the Shawnee tribe.—*Ibid.*, March 9, 1777.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, March 12, 1777.

"You are to take command," wrote Patrick Henry to Col. David Shepherd, "of 300 men drawn from the militia of Monongalia, Yohogania and Ohio Counties or either of them and to march with utmost secrecy and expedition to punish the Indians of Pluggy's Town for their late cruelties committed upon the people of this state."

⁶⁸ They were at the time exercised because of the settlement of lands on the Ohio, below the Kanawha and in Kentucky.

Indian Diplomacy

donations; and in all respects treat the Indians with "Justice, humanity and Hospitality."⁶⁹

During the summer of 1777, the British began to employ more aggressive measures, with the view of distressing the frontiers of Virginia and Pennsylvania as much as possible.⁷⁰ General Carleton directed that the savages should be kept in readiness to join his forces in the spring, or march elsewhere, "as they may be most wanted."⁷¹

Several months earlier, the plan to employ the Indians for this purpose had been proposed by Hamilton. In fulfillment of his desires, he was directed to use any means within his power to crush the "rebellion" and to assemble as many Indians as convenient, under suitable leaders, for that purpose.⁷² From the friendly disposition manifested by the representatives of the leading tribes of the Northwest, in a council held at Detroit (June 17, 1777), Hamilton felt assured that 1,000 warriors were ready to overrun the frontier. Although war-bands were exhorted to act vigorously, they were urged to act with humanity.⁷³ But resolutions voiced by chiefs, to pay strict attention to the injunction that they spare the blood of the aged and of women and children, were idle.⁷⁴ Special presents for proofs of obedience signified little, where scalps were paid for.⁷⁵

Meantime much time was consumed at Pittsburgh in the discussion on the character of aggressive operations to be undertaken. It was counseled that an expedition to Detroit was the

⁶⁹ Morgan *Letter Book*, i, April 1, 1777.

⁷⁰ Draper MSS., 3NN71.

⁷¹ *Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, ix, p. 344.

⁷² Letter of Lord George Germaine, March 26, 1777, in *Ibid.*, pp. 346, 347.

⁷³ Draper MSS., 49J13.

⁷⁴ *Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, ix, p. 454.

⁷⁵ Morgan *Letter Book*, iii, March 20, 1778.

Daniel Sullivan, in a letter to Col. John Cannon, spoke of a visit to Detroit, disguised as an Indian trader, for the purpose of ascertaining conditions. While there, he learned that Hamilton, in his determination to destroy the frontier settlements, was wont to pay "very high prices in goods for scalps the Indians brought in. That he likewise pays for Prisoners but does not redeem them from the Savages and says he will not do it until the expiration of the present war."

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only remedy against the incursions of Indians. Others held this plan to be impracticable and unnecessary. No more telling reasons for the probability of a successful attack on Detroit, were formulated during the entire war, than those submitted by Colonel Morgan. He urged:⁷⁶ first, That the road was practicable; second, that the Delawares and Shawnee were disposed to remain quiet; third, that there were no powerful tribes near or on the road to Detroit, to oppose such an expedition; fourth, that Detroit was at the time in a defenseless state; fifth, that it was from that post that the offending Western Indians were supplied "in all their wants and paid for all their murders;" and sixth, that its possession would induce all the tribes, through fear and interest, to enter into an American alliance.⁷⁷ For the purpose, he advised from 1,200 to 1,500 regular troops and such volunteers as might be secured. He opposed continuously the plan of General McIntosh, who looked toward retaliatory expeditions. Not only were these expeditions failures, but they prevented the possibility of the capture of Detroit. Finding that his advise was unheeded, and confident that the policy then adhered to would produce a general Indian war, Colonel Morgan resigned his office as Indian agent.

At this critical time, when the control of the Western Department was about to pass into the hands of incompetent men; when conditions seemed to warrant the recommendation by the Board of War for the immediate assembling of the Indians for another treaty;⁷⁸ and when it seemed probable that the British and their Indian confederates were prepared to overrun the entire frontier, the authorities at Detroit were forced to turn their attention to the advance of George Rogers Clark.⁷⁹ With his coming, a new phase of the war in the West was inaugurated.

⁷⁶ Morgan *Letter Book*. iii, July 17, 1778: submitted to Col. Daniel Brodhead.

⁷⁷ It was his belief that there were only some 300 hostile Indians in the Western Department. Schoolcraft estimated that of the 7,280 Indians capable of bearing arms, only 390 were in the employ of the British. In this estimate, however, he did not include the numbers enlisted from the Sauk, Fox, and Iowa tribes. These alone were able to summon 1,400 warriors.—Schoolcraft, *Indian Tribes*, iii, pp. 560, 561.

⁷⁸ June 28, 1778. *Jour. of Continental Congress*, xi, p. 568.

⁷⁹ Hamilton learned of the capture of Kaskaskia on Aug. 6, 1778.—*Mich. Pion. and Hist. Colls.*, ix, p. 490.

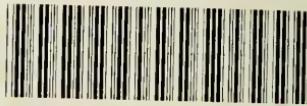
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